

EXPLORATION for fossil reserves continues





CURRENTLY the ship Fugro Americas is in Aruba's territorial waters, conducting a very important job exploring the fossil reserves, the Minister of Energy Mike De Meza said.

"We are continuing with the next phase of the exploration of fossil reserves that continues with the analysis of bi-dimensional seismological and the tri-dimensional seismological analysis," the Minister said.

Last week Minister Mike De Meza together with representatives of REPSOL, Utilities, and Aruban Company of Petroleum visited and toured the ship, which will be taking 104 different samples. To take the samples, the engineers will have to penetrate five to six meters of the subsurface of the ocean and also measure the temperatures of the area where the samples are taken.

The leader of Economic Affairs, Communication, Energy and the Environment explained that from the samples the involved companies will get information for a deeper analysis connected to the exploration for fossil reserves. The samples will be analyzed for the presence of relevant substances such as hydrocarbons from the subsurface. This will assist in the interpretation of the research that has already been conducted, the Minister said.

In the future, if the Government makes the decision to start doing trial drills, the information received from these samples will be very important, Minister De Meza informed. The exploration will last for three weeks, and will be happening 24 hours a day.

The preparation for the next phase, as well as the former phases, was done in dialog with the local ngo's and environmental agencies. Exploration into the fossil reserves is a lot of work and what is currently happening is a great experience for Aruba, said the Minister. "Hopefully in the end it will be positive; it is very interesting so far," the Minister said.



New board for the FTA



DURING the recent XXII Congress of the workers union Federacion di Trahadornan di Aruba (FTA), held on the 20, 21, and 22 of May, a new board was elected. The congress with the theme of Ombudsman was held at the Alhambra Ballroom.

The new board was sworn for a three-year period of service, 2015-2018. The new main board and

secretaries consist of the following persons: Main Board: President Hubert M. Dirksz; Vice-president Tyrone T. Bremono; Treasurer Ulrich L. Ponson; Secretary of Formation and Organization Magaly Sneek; and Secretary of Complaints, Disputes, Conflicts and Social Affairs Marlene Calmes.

Sector Secretaries: Construction Ivan Croes; Hospitality Andrew St. Aubin; Casino Jeffrey

Blijden; Industry and Commerce Jennifer Ollivierre; Banking and Insurance Elgar Gomes; Transport and Communication Jane Soliana; and Mixed Daisy Faro.

The FTA thanks all the delegates who participated, also to all who worked to help make the conference and the FTA XXII Congress a success, said Hubert Dirksz, the new FTA President.

Heavy delinquents HELP young delinquents to bring them back on the right track



THINGS will change in the Correctional Institute of Aruba (KIA). The prison plans to use the help and experience of heavy inmates to guide the young ones on the right track. This is what Jackeliene Geeve, reporter of the Caribbean Network informed. She also talked to Trudy Hassel, the Director of KIA. One heavy delinquent who agreed to help stimulate the younger inmates positively is R. of 29 years of age. He is serving a life sentence for voluntary manslaughter and wants to use his time in prison to do something good.

"I was also young once and did wrong things. This is the reason why I am in here now. With my experience I want to help others so they won't commit the same errors."

This new correctional program also prepares young inexperienced delinquents to be better prepared for society when they come out of prison. The intention of Director Hassel is to reach the young men by using older inmates who are detained in KIA for long years and have experienced the criminal life but now are willing to make their lives better.

"The young men many times are too insecure and are easily influenced. They have a big mouth but in reality they have very low self esteem. They think that they are not good and have no value and think with a loud attitude they will acquire respect and value from

others. We want to change this. We want to show them that they can be important to the society."

The new correctional program began last week and will continue for three months. The first reactions are positive.

"The older inmates tell me that I am wasting my time here," said a younger delinquent. "That is how I also see it now. When I leave prison I want to do the right things. I want to work for my money, and [do] good things."

The young men also learn to have respect for each other which is still lacking. The internal team of assistance constantly has to stop fights between these young men. There is also a tension between rival gangs from outside which infiltrates in the correctional institute.

Trudy Hassel, has been the director of KIA for three months now. Before that she was a Police Officer for many years. She wants to change the norms of punishments.

"You can keep punishing these young men for ever. But to me that does not make any sense. There are about five men who are serving a long sentence, but they are using their time productively."

Every day they do sports with the young men, they serve as mentors and lead edifying games to teach the younger ones the meaning of the word respect.

Arion Wine Company hosts a
Cab and Beef
SEMINAR
 with Jackson Family Wines



MEMBERS of the food and beverage industry in Aruba recently came together for an entertaining and enlightening food and wine seminar, hosted by Arion Wine Company and Jackson Family Wines. The seminar, led by the first female Master Sommelier in Canada, Jennifer Huether, focused on pairing different cuts of beef with Cabernet Sauvignon Wines.

Participants were welcomed with a Galerie Naissance Sauvignon Blanc, before a pre-tasting with a selection of Jackson Family Wines, including a Kendall-Jackson 'Vintner's Reserve' Chardonnay, Stonestreet Chardonnay, La Crema Pinot Noir and Byron Pinot Noir.

It was then on to the 'meat' of the seminar, where the group explored the nuances of pairing beef with wine, and how the full-bodied nature of the Cabernet Sauvignon stands up perfectly to a hearty steak. Cuts of Ribeye and Filet Mignon were served, paired with a Kendall-Jackson 'Vintner's Reserve' Cabernet Sauvignon, 2005 Freemark Abbey Sycamore Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon and the Stonestreet Cabernet Sauvignon.

Founded in 1982 by Jess Jackson, the Jackson Family vineyards and wineries are first and foremost family-owned and operated, which was Jess Jackson's goal, when he entered the wine business three decades ago, wishing to create a family enterprise specializing in handmade wines of unmatched character.

Arion Wine Company is a local wine importing firm, offering great wines, teaching seminars, organizing tastings and educating those working in the hospitality sector. Arion Wine Company represents some of the world's most outstanding wineries in Aruba.

Photos show members of the food and beverage industry, enjoying the Cab and Beef Seminar led by Jackson Family Wines' Master Sommelier Jennifer Huether.



Participants complete

small and medium BUSINESS COURSE

AFTER six months of an intensive class, the course Independent Small/Medium Business Owner that started last year in October has been completed. The course was the first of its kind given by the Aruba Chamber of Commerce (KvK), as part of its task to inform and educate (future) business owners to be better prepared when establishing and managing a business.

With a variety of topics such as marketing, legislation, finance and administration, taxes, human resources, and various other aspects of business, the course focused on broadening the knowledge of the participants. The KvK says the period of the course was not easy for the participants, but required much sacrifice and hard work on their part to complete their final exam successfully.

Some of the participants already have businesses; others were full-time employees, so each had to make extra time for the course outside of their normal activities. During six months, twice a week the participants had to be present during evening hours, along with the time they had to dedicate to homework and additional preparation for the final exam. A total of 15 participants were able to complete their exam successfully and received their certificate.

The certificates were presented to the participants on Friday, 22 May at the KvK, followed by a celebration with drinks and hors d'oeuvres. President of the KvK Daphne Lejeuz, who also said some words of praise for the participants for their efforts and accomplishments, handed out the certificates. Also the director for the KvK, Leo Maduro, and Manager of the Business Info & Support Department Sonja Velthuisen gave speeches at the occasion.

The certificate received by the participants is comparable to a medium-level degree in the Netherlands. It is of great value to the person, as well as their business that will be registered with the Aruba Chamber when it is signed up.

The KvK would like to thank all people who helped make the course possible: Dave Martinus, Patrick Melchior, Bruce Harms, Ryan Maduro, Guido Picus, Bert Vermaas, Department of Legislative Affairs, Ramphis Tromp, Frank Sniijders, Goswin Oduber, Robert Lejeuz, Ronald Erasmus, and the colleagues of the KvK.

Preparations for the following course of Independent Small/Medium Business Owner are already on the way, and some people have already signed up for the course. The course is scheduled to start in October of this year, for a period of six months.

For more information on the course, or to sign up, please contact Sonja Velthuisen at businessinfo@arubachamber.com or call 582-1566 ext. 42.





LOVERS of short films will be spoiled again this year with a tremendous film festival with a duration of approximately 15 minutes. A difference this year will be two extra categories: Youth Category, from 12 to 18 years and the Adult Category which will be from 19 years and up.

The dates for this festival will be from Wednesday 2nd until Saturday 5th of September. The first two days are the pre-selection of the films. Wednesday, September 2nd will be the selection of the 5 best youth films. And Thursday, September 3rd will be the selection of the 5 best adult's films. The nominees will be announced on Thursday night. The final night for the Youth Category will be on Friday, 4th of September. And the final night for the Adult competition will be on September 5th. This will take place at Cas di Cultura (House of Culture)

Registration started already from the last May 1st and many participants already have registered through our website www.arubashortfilmfestival.com or at our FB-Pages Aruba Short Film Festival. There will be fantastic prizes including a registry for the winner short films at the International Film Festival which will be at Cannes and the winners will also be taken to New York for a week with all expenses paid to attend the New York Film Academy. The last day to turn in the short film will be August 1st 2015.

For more information, please visit our FB-page or our website.





Prime Minister Eman opens Sustainability course at the University

ACCORDING to Prime Minister Eman, the goal for Aruba to become a potential in alternative energy and along with that convert the knowledge of our people into an economic sector, is not an empty promise. Recently the Prime Minister spoke to a group of students from Arizona State University (ASU) who have come to study the advances the island has made in the area of sustainability. The course the students are taking is one step closer in the direction of creating the Green Faculty at the University of Aruba (UA), the Prime Minister informed.

The 15 students from the Ira A. Fulton School of Engineering of ASU are in Aruba for a summer school class. This cooperation between the American University and the UA was negotiated by Dutch research organization TNO, which has a branch established on Aruba. The summer program called Sustainable Island Solutions will last for two weeks, during which the students will learn about the sustainability projects Aruba has implemented and is executed with the goal of reaching 100 percent independence from fuel in 2020.

Prime Minister Mike Eman was invited to address the students during the opening of the course on Monday, as the leader of the vision for alternative energy and total conversion of Aruba to renewable energy, at the aula of UA. The leader was happy to see the highest educational body on the island on the right track towards implementing a faculty of sustainability.

Prime Minister Eman shared the experiences that have taken the island to where it is currently and the vision behind this with the young people. In return the students and their professor will be exchanging knowledge and helping the island reach the stipulated objectives with a new and different perspective.

SIMAR clarifies misinformation

published on Teacher Suky case

Teaching union SIMAR says it is a pity that several communication media have published information without checking first with the source if the information they received is correct. This, because the information can affect those concerned in a negative way.

SIMAR representatives say this is especially true when it comes to media, reporters and broadcasters who are connected to political parties, and working on a "very unprofessional" manner and "offending SIMAR and its representatives", without approaching them for the correct information. Because of this situation the SIMAR feels it needs to present its side of the story, even though it pertains to information the SIMAR had rather kept to itself.

Teacher Suky Case

When Suky Croes, teacher at the Kudawecha elementary school, approached the SIMAR for support and advice in her case, she was not a member of the SIMAR at that time. Even so, taking into consideration the gravity of her situation, the SIMAR board opened its doors to her and her colleagues, whom for the most part were also not members at that time.

Croes was received by President Sheila Lazo-Tromp, who then immediately informed the board on the situation. The board approved to meet with Croes right away. The SIMAR provided a legal advisor and their lawyer to be able to take the necessary steps.

The board contacted DPS, the public school administration, Director Whitney Kock for information, sat down with Minister Hooyboer-Winklaar regarding the case, and met with lawyer David Kock to discuss the following steps.

The SIMAR lawyer started the case with the filing of a summary proceeding, and a civil suit. The main purpose of the summary proceeding was to annul the decision of the DPS director, representing Minister Hooyboer-Winklaar, which was the suspension of Croes, and to have her allowed back at work. Consequently Minister Hooyboer, through her attorney, informed that she was withdrawing her decision of the suspension, and that Croes could go back to work. Because of this decision, there was no further need to have this handled by a Judge. The SIMAR, through their attorney, was pending to continue with the civil suit, which would address among other topics the procedure taken by DPS/ the Minister, the charge against Croes, and the investigation itself. It is a regular

process at the judicial level. So, it is not correct that SIMAR and Attorney Kock have withdrawn the case, or not given the proper attention to the case, SIMAR representatives say.

Attorney Hendrick Croes takes over

SIMAR also wanted to assert that it is not so that Attorney Hendrick Croes, who is now handling teacher Croes' case, had to start all over with the case. The case continued on, and SIMAR passed the case file on to Attorney Croes.

SIMAR also said that they do not agree with the teacher Croes' decision to switch attorneys, but do respect her decision. The union was not willing to inform what the reasons for the teacher's change were, but did say that they have warned teacher Croes of the possible consequences she may have to bear, keeping in mind the political connection Attorney Croes has with the opposition party, or the position this party has taken against the Education Minister in Parliament.

In spite of the decision made by teacher Croes, the board of SIMAR will continue to support her at every level, except for judicially. However, as a new member, and by choosing her own lawyer, most of the judicial costs will be at the expense of teacher Croes, SIMAR informed. SIMAR wants to make clear that it not true that teacher Croes was "abandoned, was chased away from the SIMAR, got a knife in her back, was betrayed, or was poorly represented" by SIMAR of their lawyer. On the contrary, the board immediately supported teacher Croes wholeheartedly.

Monitoring the case

SIMAR continues to monitor the case closely, both for the wellbeing of the concerned teacher, as well as the general interests, as related to the treatment, care and security of teachers in similar cases.

Minister of Education Hooyboer-Winklaar gave her word, SIMAR says, that the investigation of the case would not exceed the period of a month. This period has already expired. According to the latest information received by the SIMAR, the investigation needed more time, because among other things, several of the individuals/colleagues of teacher Croes who had to provide information on the case cancelled, and new appointments had to be made with them. The board of the SIMAR hopes this "bitter chapter" will soon be closed, and that the case will close "positively" in favor of teacher Suky Croes.

IDENTIFICATION Procedure starts in 2016



THE Civil Registry of Aruba, Censo, is working on the possibility to make the identification card, the "cedula" in Aruba instead of in Holland as it has been done until now.

Interested companies can send their offers until June 8th. This project will be financed by the "Fondo Desaroyo Arubano (FDA).

The Director of Censo, mr. Sharine Luydens, informs that as informational meeting has been held with the companies that are interested to make the Cedula. There were six companies present in the meeting and they received the necessary information of the conditions and demands of the project. According to Luydens, nine companies received an invitation to participate in the project. The deadline to turn in the request form will be June 8th. Censo will then decide which company is the best for executing the project.

Delivery of Identification cards

Luydens continues by saying that the security during the process of applying for the Cedula and during the delivery of the Cedula is central. Each step of the procedure would be done by a different person. Moreover it is the intention to deliver the Cedula in a 15 minute time slot.

The Director of the Censo can still not say when the production of the Cedula will

start in Aruba. "We will do our utmost to start this project this year. But if this is not the case, we will start for sure next year."

FDA

The cost of the equipment will be covered by the FDA. Luydens is happy about this. Since the year 2003, the previous government took the decision to have both the identification cards and the driver's license done in Aruba instead of in Holland. This decision had nothing to do with a poor quality, because the quality was good. But it had to do with the inefficient procedure.

The cost to renew the cedula or the driver's license is too high. People have to wait as long as three weeks before getting their cedula or license. Even so, the costs of the procedures are too high. These are the reasons why the previous government made the decision to make these identification cards in Aruba.

A request was send to FDA to cover all the costs of the production equipment. Even though this took a long time to be accepted, the FDA has finally approved the request. No ID cards have been made since 2014. Last year in July, the contract with the Dutch Company, Sagem-identification/Morpho was stopped. The company had been making the cedulas since November 1, 2003.



UNOCA conhuntamente cu
Biblioteca Nacional Aruba

INVITACION

pa presentacion di e buki

E Fucu di e Piedra Pretonan

Mi amiga Paulina

Un storia real

di
Yolanda Croes

Diamars 26 di mei, 2015
7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Hardin di departamento
Arubiana/Caribiana
Bachstraat 5, Oranjestad

Book presentation at the library

CULTURAL Fund UNOCA invites everyone to the book presentation of "E Fucu di e Piedra Pretonan", The Bad Luck of the Black Stones, written by Yolanda Croes.

The presentation will be held in the garden of the Arubiana/Caribiana Department of the National Library at Bachstraat 5 in Oranjestad at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 26, 2015.

BOKO HARAM MILITANTS RAID NIGERIAN VILLAGE, HACK 10 TO DEATH

KANO, NIGERIA—Boko Haram militants hacked 10 people to death in a Friday raid on a village in northeast Nigeria's Adamawa state, a local government administrator said Monday.

Dozens of Boko Haram insurgents stormed Pambula-Kwamda village in Madagali district, which the military recently declared free of the militant group, and killed 10 residents, Madagali local government Chairman Maina Ularamu said. "Boko Haram insurgents on Friday attacked Pambula-Kwamda village, which is 5 kilometers from Gulak, the local government headquarters, where they hacked to death 10 people," Ularamu said.

The attackers, armed with machetes, stormed the village shortly before dawn, while residents were still asleep, he said. "According to residents of the village, the attackers didn't have much weapons, and many of them carried no arms at all. They only fired a few shots when they were leaving after the attack.

"We believe the attackers are the same people raiding villages in the area recently and are hiding in nearby bushes and mountains," Ularamu said.

In August, Boko Haram seized Madagali district in a deadly offensive that pushed troops and thousands of residents out of the area. The military reclaimed the area in March in a counteroffensive, and many residents returned to their homes after assurances that the area had been cleared of insurgents, but deadly raids persist. On May 17, scores of Boko Haram insurgents attacked nearby Sabon Garin Hyembula village, killing three people and abducting seven women as part of frequent deadly attacks in the district.

"We are mobilizing local hunters and vigilantes to go into the bushes and mountains hunt them down," Ularamu said.





3 DEAD AFTER RECORD STORMS IN TEXAS, OKLAHOMA; 12 missing in one county

(CNN) - Record-setting rains left officials in Texas and Oklahoma scrambling to assess the scope of the damage and destruction Monday as an emergency coordinator told reporters that a dozen people were missing in one county.

The 12 people missing in Hays County, Texas, come from families who had gathered for the long weekend, said Ken Bell, emergency coordinator for San Marcos, one of the cities hardest hit by the storms and flooding. The group likely includes children, Bell said.

A day after severe weather left three people dead and washed away hundreds of homes in Texas and Oklahoma, the storms are easing up.

But it doesn't mean the threat is gone.

The torrents that those storms dumped are still too much for river and creek banks to contain, and runoff was peaking early Monday, threatening continued flooding, the National Weather Service warned.

And rain relief is not coming to everyone. Forecasters warned that with the ground already saturated, even a small amount of new rain could have devastating consequences.

"Only an inch or two of rainfall could quickly lead to more flash flooding concerns," the weather service said.

The destruction and threat of more inclement weather prompted Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to add 24 counties to

the 13 already under an emergency disaster declaration, allowing the state to use all the resources "reasonably necessary to cope with this disaster."

Forecasts call for thunderstorms, hail, high winds, flash flooding, river flooding and tornadoes this week, the governor's statement said.

TEXAS HOMES WIPED AWAY

In Hays County near Austin, up to 400 homes have washed away. "We do have whole streets that have maybe one or two houses left on them, and the rest are just slabs," said Kharley Smith, emergency management coordinator.

More than 1,000 more homes were damaged, and waters washed two main bridges away in Hays.

Thunderstorms could dump 1 to 3 more inches of rain there Monday-- 5 inches in isolated areas, the weather service said.

While flood warnings and watches were winding down in most places overnight, a new flood watch loomed from Monday into early Tuesday for Hays County.

One person was confirmed dead in San Marcos, and bad weather hindered the search for missing people Sunday. Rescuers used helicopters to heave stranded residents off the rooftops of buildings surrounded by flood lakes, where normally fields stand.

The Blanco River, which flows through San Marcos, shot past its previous flood record of 33.3 feet to 40.21

feet late Saturday.

Hours earlier, it ran just over 5 feet deep, according to weather service data. Fortunately, its floodwaters should make a rapid retreat.

Nearly 200 miles northeast of Hays County, near Houston, an area of about 400 homes around Louis Creek Dam is under mandatory evacuation. The dam has not breached, but workers continue to pack soil on it.

OKLAHOMA FIREFIGHTER DROWNED

In neighboring Oklahoma, two people died.

On Saturday, a woman in Tulsa died after her car hydroplaned. In the nearby town of Claremore, a firefighter got swept into a storm drain while attempting a high-water rescue Sunday.

There, water levels in creeks usually waist-deep raged up two dozen feet or more over the weekend. Markers signifying moderate to major river flooding dotted the weather map, particularly along the border with Texas. The weekend deluges caused Oklahoma City to break its all-time rainfall record for any single month. But much of Oklahoma got a rain break Sunday. Fog wafted through Tulsa, and on Monday, there was a chance of thunderstorms there.

A flood watch is on from the southern Plains to the Gulf of Mexico. The heavier rains are moving east, where they are sending some rivers and creeks over their banks.

Obama notes milestone Memorial Day



PRESIDENT Barack Obama observed during remarks at Arlington National Cemetery on Monday that this year is the first Memorial Day in 14 years "that the United States is not engaged in a major ground war."

"It's the first since our war in Afghanistan came to an end," Obama said, adding that for "many of us, this Memorial Day is especially meaningful." There are nearly 10,000 American servicemen and women still stationed in Afghanistan serving in non-combat roles, a higher

number than Obama originally pledged when he announced his Afghanistan draw-down plan last year.

The administration cited security concerns when it announced in March that a higher number of troops would remain there.

"On this day we honor the sacrifice of thousands of American service members -- men and women who gave their lives since 9/11, including more than 2,200 American patriots who made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan," Obama

said Monday.

Obama and members of his administration have repeatedly pledged to end the Afghanistan war, including during his campaign for reelection in 2012. The 9,800 troops currently in Afghanistan are a small fraction of the 100,000 once stationed there.

He later added at Arlington that many Americans don't fully witness the sacrifices veterans make for their country. "The sacrifice that preserves the freedoms we too often take for granted." "Few know what it's like to take a bullet for a buddy or to live with the fact that he or she took one for you," he said.



(FOX NEWS) - One person was arrested Sunday evening after a bomb squad detonated a pressure cooker that was found in a vehicle near the U.S. Capitol building.

U.S. Capitol Police spokeswoman Lt. Kimberly Schneider said in a statement that Israel Shimeles of Alexandria, Va. was arrested and charged with "operating after revocation". She did not elaborate on the nature of the charge.

The incident began at around 5 p.m. local time, when Capitol police officers on patrol noticed a vehicle they deemed "suspicious" on a street that crosses the National Mall west of the Capitol between Constitution and Independence Avenues. Further investigation revealed that the vehicle contained a pressure cooker and detected an odor of gasoline.

A bomb squad was called in and streets were temporarily closed off. The pressure cooker was detonated at approximately 7:45 p.m. The investigation was closed approximately 35 minutes later with nothing further found.

Senior security officials told Fox News that investigators initially believed that the pressure cooker "might be the real deal." Pressure cookers have been used in several recent terror attacks, mostly notably the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing that killed three people and injured 260 others.

Sources told Fox News that the pressure cooker may have been part of a propane tank used in a food truck.

"[The owners'] story checked out," said one source. "But we wanted to neutralize it."

The incident took place as thousands of people were arriving at the West Front of the Capitol for the annual Memorial Day concert. The concert, which was televised nationally on PBS, featured appearances by singer Gloria Estefan, Gen. Colin Powell, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey.

The scare did not affect the show, which went off on time and without incident.

Strong quake shakes Tokyo vicinity; no damage reported



(JAPAN TIMES) - A strong quake Monday shook buildings in Tokyo, setting off alarms and temporarily bringing the subway system to a halt. There was no risk of a tsunami from the quake, which had a magnitude of 5.3, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The Meteorological Agency earlier put it at 5.6. Both runways at Narita International Airport were closed while staff checked for damage. Neither was found to have been affected. The epicenter was located in the northern part of Saitama Prefecture. NHK reported the effects were felt over a large area around the capital. There were no immediate reports of injuries or any damage, including at any of the shuttered nuclear power stations in the region.

Japan is located at the junction of a number of the Earth's tectonic plates and experiences around a fifth of the planet's most powerful quakes every year. Rigid building codes and strict enforcement mean that even powerful quakes frequently do little damage to infrastructure.

Russia launches massive air force maneuvers with 250 aircraft, 12,000 servicemen;



(FOX NEWS) MOSCOW - The Russian military has launched a massive exercise involving 250 aircraft and other weapons.

The Defense Ministry said in a statement Monday the drills will involve air force and air defense units of the Central, Western and Southern Military Districts totaling 12,000 servicemen. Combat aircraft will deploy to temporary bases and air defense systems will be sent to the Ashuluk and Kapustin Yar shooting ranges in southern Russia for training with live ammunition.

It also said long-range Russian bombers will launch cruise missiles at practice targets at a Siberian firing range.

The exercise is part of a series of Russian military maneuvers taking place amid tensions with the West over Russian actions in Ukraine. The current drills are preparation for even more massive Center-2015 maneuvers set for later this year.

Iraqi Military Vows to Recapture Ramadi After Carter Criticism

(NBC NEWS) BAGHDAD - Iraq's military vowed Monday to recapture the city of Ramadi from ISIS "within days," after a stinging criticism of its troops' "will to fight" from Secretary of Defense Ash Carter.

An 8,000-strong force of Iraqi forces, bolstered by Shiite militias and Sunni tribesmen, were amassed east of the city in the town of Khalidiya and were awaiting orders to launch "a major offensive," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "Yesterday Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi stated that the operation to liberate Ramadi will start soon, and the city is going to be liberated within days," the official said.

Eight days ago ISIS fighters hoisted their black flag over Ramadi, which is 65 miles from the center of Baghdad.

In the wake of the defeat, Defense Ash Carter told CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday that "most of us... have an issue with the will of the Iraqis to fight [ISIS] and defend themselves."

His comments came after the Pentagon said last week that a "failure of leadership and tactics" by the Iraqi security forces was partly to blame for the territorial loss.

Responding to Carter's comments, Al-Abadi's media director Dr. Sa'ad Al-Hadithi told NBC News the Iraqi government had "started its own investigation to punish those who neglected their duty" in Ramadi.

The senior defense official conceded that "the Iraqi government now is under a real pressure after the latest statement by the U.S. secretary of defense concerning the will of Iraqis to fight for their country."



\$1.8 BILLION **DISAPPEARS** **IN RUSSIAN** **SPACE PROGRAM**

(CNN MONEY) - Russia's space industry is in crisis caused by funding cuts, corruption and "moral decay," government officials said.

Billions of rubles have been lost in shady transactions. Construction projects are languishing. And important launches are failing.

In 2014 alone, federal space agency Roscosmos committed 92 billion rubles (\$1.8 billion) worth of financial violations, according to Russia's public spending watchdog agency.

The head of the the audit office, Tatyana Golikova, said the amount of money allegedly misused initially shocked her.

"At first I could not believe my inspectors," Golikova told the Russian parliament during her annual presentation on Friday.

At the center of Roscosmos' problems is the construction of the Vostochny Cosmodrome. The new space launch site in the eastern part of the country was originally set to open by the end of this year, and its first manned missions were planned for 2018.

But the project has suffered a series of setbacks because of funding problems and alleged corruption. Golikova, the audit chief, said construction costs have ballooned by 20%. Several criminal cases are under way over corruption allegations.

The cosmodrome is crucial for Russia's ability to launch rockets. The country still relies on the Soviet-era Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan for its space travel.

To add to the misery, Russia has lost two spacecraft in the last month. A crewless cargo space ship burned up in the Earth's atmosphere after a communication failure, and a Proton-M carrier rocket carrying a Mexican satellite crashed in Siberia. Russia's deputy prime minister, Dmitry Rogozin, blamed the accident on chronic corruption in the space industry.

"With such a level of moral decay, one should not be surprised at the high accident rate," Rogozin, who is in charge of the aerospace sector, said in a statement.

The Russian space program has suffered deep cuts because of the economic crisis. The Federal Space Agency's budget for the next decade was slashed by 35% to 2 trillion rubles (\$37 billion) in March.

After Senate vote, NSA prepares to shut down phone tracking program

(LA TIMES) - Hours after the Senate balked at reauthorizing the bulk collection of U.S. telephone records, the National Security Agency began shutting down a controversial program Saturday that senior intelligence and law enforcement officials say is vital to track terrorists in the United States.

The Senate had debated into early predawn hours Saturday but failed to reach a deal to reform the program or extend its life beyond May 31, when the law used to authorize it is set to expire. Lawmakers then left on a weeklong recess, vowing to return at the end of it to try again in a rare Sunday session.

Administration officials said later that they had to start the lengthy procedure of winding down the counter-terrorism program in anticipation of Congress failing to act.

"That process has begun," an administration official said Saturday.

Intelligence officials warned of a precipitous gap in data collected if Congress does not come up with a plan before May 31 to either expand the NSA's authority — which is unlikely — or replace the program in an orderly way over several months.

The start of the wind-down process marks the most significant step the Obama administration has taken to limit the data collection since former NSA contractor Edward Snowden leaked documents in 2013 showing the government was siphoning and holding millions of so-called toll records of domestic phone calls.

The data include the number dialed, duration, date and time for most telephone calls made by Americans. The information is then searched for connections to the phone numbers of known or suspected terrorists. About 300 such searches were made in 2014.

Opponents of the program, including presidential candidate Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), are concerned that the massive database could invite abuse by future administrations that want to find out how citizens are connected to one another, stifle dissent or crack down on political enemies.

"The Bill of Rights is worth losing sleep over," Paul wrote on Twitter on Friday night after he sent the Senate into overdrive by running the clock on procedural steps. "Continuing to filibuster against NSA bulk surveillance."

Paul won praise from his supporters for his unrelenting stand against the surveillance program. Two Republican lawmakers from the House came to the late-night Senate session to back the senator. But his maneuver drew grumbles from fellow senators in his party who

viewed it as a campaign stunt.

The program, which puts data from phone companies into U.S. databases, is complex and requires several days to shut down, officials said. Intelligence officials said they had to start taking steps now in order to stay within the bounds of the law, particularly after a federal circuit court ruling this month found the NSA program to be illegal. The decision invalidated the legal analysis of the Patriot Act that NSA lawyers used for years to justify large-scale collection and storage of call records.

The standoff in Congress also puts in jeopardy some lesser-known parts in the Patriot Act, which was passed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

One of them allows the FBI to collect business records, such as credit card and banking data, for use in terrorism investigations. Another authorizes "roving wiretaps," which permit the FBI to eavesdrop on every phone used by a terrorism suspect without seeking separate court warrants for each one.

Another helps the FBI track a "lone wolf," an individual suspected of planning a terrorist attack, even if he or she has no known link to a terrorist group. If the provisions lapse, the FBI could continue using the roving wiretap and lone wolf authorities in existing cases only. "We better be ready next Sunday afternoon to prevent the country from being endangered by the total expiration of the program," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said as he left the Capitol.

Senators had rejected two bills that would have continued the program, including one overwhelmingly approved by the House and backed by the White House that would put limits on the government's ability to acquire phone data.

The House bill gave the NSA six months to shift from collecting and holding the raw call data on government servers to a program that requested the records from telephone companies on a case-by-case basis. It fell three votes short in the Senate. Many view it as the most viable compromise.

Then proposals from McConnell to continue the program as is, with no changes, for as little as one extra day, also fell short.

Paul objected to those measures, as did two Democrats, a further sign of bipartisan opposition to extending the program without changes. Paul, who has made shutting down the NSA program a focus of his presidential bid, engaged in a 10½-hour talk-a-thon this week to delay proceedings.

"It's not about making a point, it's about trying to end bulk collection," Paul said. The debate has been



difficult for Congress, and especially McConnell, the Republican leader who backs Paul for president but disagrees with his fellow home-state senator on this issue. Senate Republican leaders had reversed course earlier Friday and signaled they would consider legislation to revamp how the NSA searches U.S. telephone records, but after lawmakers return from the holiday recess. Legislation promised by Sen. Richard M. Burr (R-N.C.), chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, is expected to include many elements of the House-passed USA Freedom Act.

Fearful of allowing a counter-terrorism program to close on their watch, some senators suggested an agreement could still be reached before May 31. "We don't want a dark period," Sen. Dan Coats (R-Ind.), a member of the Intelligence Committee, said before lawmakers adjourned.

Others expressed hope that if record collection were interrupted, the impact on the NSA would not be dire. "What would happen during that time period, they just wouldn't be scraping data, but they still would be carrying out other parts of the program," said Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

But more hawkish lawmakers oppose elements of the compromise approach. They want to keep the NSA's program in place as is until they are certain the alternative methods being pushed by privacy advocates will work.

"The way you determine it doesn't work is when the bomb goes off, and all of a sudden people say, 'Hey, it didn't work,'" Coats said. "That's why holding it at current level is, we think, necessary until it's proven that, yes, we can do this."

Administration officials are urging Congress to act quickly and comprehensively. A stopgap measure to extend the program past May 31 would not satisfy the court order, they say, and would not stop the dismantling of the phone record collection effort.

Wayne Rooney tells Gary Neville Manchester United are ready to make Premier League title challenge



(SKYSPORTS) - Wayne Rooney believes Manchester United will be well placed to challenge for the Premier League title next season.

In his first season in charge at Old Trafford, Louis van Gaal has guided Manchester United to a top-four finish and back into the Champions League.

In an exclusive interview with Sky Sports' football expert Gary Neville - which will be shown in full during a Monday Night Football end-of-season special - Rooney said that although they have finished well short of champions Chelsea in terms of points, United have shown they are not too far behind.

"I believe we are [close]," he said.

"You take the first 10, 11 games and I think we had 13 points. When you consider from after that amount of games to where we've finished, we've probably got as many points after that as anyone else.

"I think we're close, there's no doubt about it. You can see in our performances, we're outplaying teams, dominating possession, and it's just that final thing of taking our chances.

"In the Chelsea game, if I had scored that with my left foot then it could have been a completely different game and might have put them under a bit of pressure - it might have been a lot closer than it's finished.

"As a group of players, myself and the manager - we all believe we're close and I'm sure with a player or two in the summer we'll have a good chance of going for the title."

Van Gaal took over at Old Trafford 12 months ago after United finished seventh in the table, and Rooney said a top-four target was more realistic than gunning for the title straight away.

Obviously there was change of manager, change of coaches, a lot of new players coming in - realistically we knew it was going to be a tough ask for us to go and win the Premier League," Rooney added.

"The least we wanted was a top-four finish because, after last season, for this football club it would've been a disaster if we didn't make the top four.

"That's the plus we can take. It would have been nice to win some silverware - that's why the Arsenal defeat in the cup was so disappointing - but in terms of the Premier League the most vital thing for us was getting in the top four."



LIVERPOOL TO REVIEW SEASON BUT NOT CONSIDERING SACKING BRENDAN RODGERS

(SKYSPORTS) - LIVERPOOL are not considering replacing under-fire manager Brendan Rodgers this summer, according to Sky sources.

The Reds, who finished second in the 2013/2014 season, ended a disappointing season with a 6-1 defeat at the hands of Stoke on Saturday - prompting speculation Rodgers would be shown the door by the Liverpool owners.

But despite the heavy loss at the Britannia Stadium condemning Liverpool to a sixth-place Premier League finish, sources at the club have suggested a season review - expected to take place in June - will stop short of looking for a new manager.

In the wake of a game that saw Steven Gerrard bow out with a consolation goal, Rodgers said: "I've always said that if the owners want me to go, then I go. It's as simple as that".

"But I still feel I've got a lot to offer the club. A lot has happened this year which has made the job difficult, but I totally understand that".

"We finish in sixth position, which is where we deserve to finish. It's a big, big summer ahead. We lose Steven after today and you've seen again his inspiration in the team to get a goal. We've got a hell of a lot of work to do.

"I think it's clear, you look at our goals over the course of the season and [the lack of goals] has been the major contributing factor.

"I've had to look at different ideas and different ways to make the team create and score more.

"We've taken our beating today. Stoke were better than us, especially in that first half. Second half we were much better and much more authoritative in the game, but still we can't take much away from losing 6-1."